



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

APR 12 2001

OFFICE OF
AIR AND RADIATION

Ms. Betty L. Serian
Deputy Secretary for Safety Administration
Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
1101 South Front Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17104

Dear Ms. Serian:

Thank you for your letter of April 9, 2001, providing us with information on your auto emissions inspection acceleration simulation mode (ASM) program and an update on the status of the litigation regarding the application of final cutpoints in the Philadelphia area program.

As you may know, early last year the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) used existing data from previous EPA and state funded studies to generate a draft partial set of alternative ASM cutpoints which appear to lower the level of false failures. These cutpoints were then applied to ASM field data provided by Pennsylvania and Georgia to estimate what the overall failure rate would be if these new alternative cutpoints were implemented. Since that time, additional ASM data from the California Air Resources Board has been brought to our attention that should be included in the analysis. All of this research must be verified with additional data which will be collected under contract. At that time, EPA will issue final guidance to states implementing new cutpoints. This detailed research, and a complete and thorough analysis, are vitally important to avoid potential false failures, especially in older vehicles.

We applaud Pennsylvania for beginning the implementation of final cutpoints for 1996 and newer vehicles utilizing ASM testing equipment earlier this year. As I am sure your data shows, there has been minimal impact on failure rates for these vehicles and therefore the program's overall failure rate. Data thus far shows no reason why the Commonwealth should not continue to employ these cutpoints for these vehicles.

At this time, EPA strongly advises Pennsylvania not to implement the existing final cutpoints for 1995 and older vehicles until our research is complete and final guidance is issued. We want effective vehicle emission testing programs that employ testing protocols which are both consistent with the best available research and technology and with the intent of the state implementation plan's (SIP) requirements for inspection and maintenance (I/M) programs. Once the final guidance for ASM cutpoints

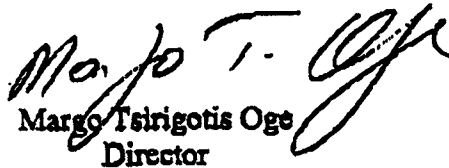
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is issued, EPA Region III stands ready to assist you and the Pennsylvania DEP in making the necessary changes to your SIP as expeditiously as possible to reflect the appropriate final cutpoints.

It is important to note that these alternative ASM cutpoints are not expected to provide further emissions reductions beyond what we expect from implementation of the existing EPA final cutpoints, as published in our July 2000 guidance. While it is conceivable that avoiding false failures will prevent inappropriate repair work on "clean" vehicles, it is not possible to quantify what these benefits may be. Therefore, we believe the credit for the ASM test using the new alternative cutpoints will be the same as it would be for the ASM test using the existing final cutpoints from our July 2000 guidance.

I hope this information is useful as you move forward with Pennsylvania's I/M program. I fully appreciate the hard work you and the teams from Transportation and Environmental Resources have done both in implementing and managing the Pennsylvania program for the past four years. If you have additional questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact Lee Cook of my staff at (734) 214-4820 or Marcia Spink in Region III at (215) 814-2104.

Sincerely,



Margo Tsigotis Oge
Director

Office of Transportation and Air Quality